

## Kosmas Calls for Additional Funds for Ponce Inlet Jetty Extension in Testimony before House Subcommittee

Project will Create 80 Jobs, Prevent Hazardous Boating Conditions

November 18, 2009

(Washington, DC) — Today, Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas (FL-24) testified before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Water Resources Subcommittee about the need for authorizing additional funding for the Ponce Inlet South Jetty expansion project in the 2010 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). The extension of the jetty is estimated to create 80 jobs while providing protection of the inlet from accelerated shoaling rates and hazardous boating conditions. It will also help maintain the inlet for Coast Guard operations and reduce future federal dredging costs.

Kosmas had recently secured what was thought to be the final \$2 million needed to complete the project in the Fiscal Year 2010 Energy and Water Appropriations Act. However, at a project meeting convened by Kosmas in August, it was determined that rising granite prices combined with other issues have caused the Army Corps of Engineers to revise its 1998 cost estimate of \$5.45 million up to \$18.7 million. Volusia County has committed to increasing its non-federal share, but a reauthorization is needed to provide additional federal funds.

"The Ponce Inlet South Jetty extension is a job-creating project that is critical for Volusia County's economy," said Congresswoman Kosmas. "We must finish this project to improve navigation and safety for commercial, recreational, and Coast Guard boat traffic. I appreciate that committee members took the time to hear my testimony, and I am hopeful that they will agree to include additional funding in the next year's Water Resources Development bill."

"The Ponce Inlet project is a top priority for the county to provide a long-term solution to the hazardous conditions of the inlet," said Volusia County Chair Frank T. Bruno Jr.

Congresswoman Kosmas has made funding key Central Florida projects such as the jetty expansion a top priority. These projects create jobs while improving the infrastructure that our communities depend on for long-term economic success.

Congresswoman Kosmas's testimony before the Water Resources Subcommittee can be found below:

Chairwoman Johnson and Ranking Member Boozman, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today about a project of great importance to my District -- the construction of the South Jetty at Ponce de Leon Inlet in Volusia County. This project was the county's number one funding priority for FY10 appropriations and is also supported by a number of users, including commercial businesses in the county.

This project was first approved for study by the Army Corps in 1991. The study was completed in September 1999 and

authorized in that year's WRDA bill. The Corps' study recommended construction of a 1,000 foot-long seaward extension of the existing south jetty, which has since been buried under sand. The study and authorization were achieved after many years of advocacy by the local congressional delegation in support of Volusia County's continued efforts to achieve a more stable Ponce DeLeon Inlet.

Based on 1998 prices, the funding level authorized a total of \$5.45 million for the project. All necessary non-federal funds based on this funding level have already been secured by the County with the State of Florida and the Florida Inland Navigation District contributing as well. The project has received federal funds in FY05, FY06, and FY08. Additionally, I helped to secure the final portion of federal funds required by the original authorization in the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 and in the FY10 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, which would have allowed construction to begin this year. Unfortunately, rising granite prices on another jetty project in Florida, inflation, and a redesign to address concerns over surf conditions caused the Army Corps to revise its cost estimate this summer to \$18.7 million. In order to comply with Section 902 maximum cost requirements, this revised estimate requires re-authorization of the project. Therefore, I am here today to ask you to consider including language to modify the original authorized funding level in the Water Resources Development Act of 2010.

This request stems from a meeting I convened in August with Volusia County and the Jacksonville District of the Army Corps, including the new district head Colonel Pantano and the project manager, in order to establish an action plan to address the rising costs. At the meeting all parties, including myself, agreed to pursue additional funding as well as investigate the possibilities of reducing costs by studying options such as mixing different material with the granite and constructing a shorter jetty. Even with a tight budget, Volusia County committed to meeting the revised non-federal cost share despite its quadrupling from \$2.46 million to \$8.15 million and has maintained a fruitful partnership with the Jacksonville District. With your approval, I would like to submit a letter from the County stating its strong support for this project into the record.

Along with Volusia County, I believe we must complete this project -- otherwise the inlet will continue to be extremely dangerous for navigation, including access to the nearby Coast Guard station.

More specifically, this proposal will improve navigation and safety for commercial, recreational, and Coast Guard boat traffic by moving the deep-water channel from the north side to the center of the inlet. The inlet's current instability allows excessive shoaling with sediment deposited in the mouth of the jetty, which has caused the capsizing of numerous boats and even boat-related deaths. The reduction of sediment deposition in the inlet and the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway will also result in the accumulation of sand on south facing beaches leading to the reversal of current erosion patterns and will help to reduce the Federal recurring operations and maintenance costs associated with the inlet.

Additionally, the county expects that approximately 80 new jobs, which are greatly needed in Central Florida, would be created by this project.

In conclusion, construction of the South Jetty extension will create a complete solution with the North Jetty by providing a safe and navigable inlet for boaters and protecting valuable beaches and surf conditions. Thank you again for allowing me to testify; I look forward to working with you to complete this vital project.

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